

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

PCT

NOTICE INFORMING THE APPLICANT OF THE
COMMUNICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
APPLICATION TO THE DESIGNATED OFFICES

(PCT Rule 47.1(c), first sentence)

To:

MOMSEN, LEONARDOS & CIA.
Mr. Gustavo José F. Barbosa
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20090-080 Rio de Janeiro RJ
BRÉSIL

Date of mailing (day/month/year)
21 May 2004 (21.05.2004)

Applicant's or agent's file reference
PE-0692

IMPORTANT NOTICE

International application No.
PCT/BR2003/000122

International filing date (day/month/year)
27 August 2003 (27.08.2003)

Priority date (day/month/year)
04 November 2002 (04.11.2002)

Applicant

COMPANHIA BRASILEIRA DE METALURGIA E MINERAÇÃO - CBMM et al

1. Notice is hereby given that the International Bureau has communicated, as provided in Article 20, the international application to the following designated Offices on the date indicated above as the date of mailing of this notice:

AU, AZ, BY, CH, CN, CO, DZ, EP, HU, JP, KG, KP, KR, MD, MK, MZ, RU, TM, US

In accordance with Rule 47.1(c), third sentence, those Offices will accept the present notice as conclusive evidence that the communication of the international application has duly taken place on the date of mailing indicated above and no copy of the international application is required to be furnished by the applicant to the designated Office(s).

2. The following designated Offices have waived the requirement for such a communication at this time:

AE, AG, AL, AM, AP, AT, BA, BB, BG, BR, BZ, CA, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EA, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, ID, IL, IN, IS, KE, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MG, MN, MW, MX, NI, NO, NZ, OA, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, TJ, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW

The communication will be made to those Offices only upon their request. Furthermore, those Offices do not require the applicant to furnish a copy of the international application (Rule 49.1(a-bis)).

3. Enclosed with this notice is a copy of the international application as published by the International Bureau on 21 May 2004 (21.05.2004) under No. WO 2004/042095

4. TIME LIMITS for filing a demand for international preliminary examination and for entry into the national phase

The applicable time limit for entering the national phase will, subject to what is said in the following paragraph, be 30 MONTHS from the priority date, not only in respect of any elected Office if a demand for international preliminary examination is filed before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date, but also in respect of any designated Office, in the absence of filing of such demand, where Article 22(1) as modified with effect from 1 April 2002 applies in respect of that designated Office. For further details, see *PCT Gazette* No. 44/2001 of 1 November 2001, pages 19926, 19932 and 19934, as well as the *PCT Newsletter*, October and November 2001 and February 2002 issues.

In practice, time limits other than the 30-month time limit will continue to apply, for various periods of time, in respect of certain designated or elected Offices. For regular updates on the applicable time limits (20, 21, 30 or 31 months, or other time limit), Office by Office, refer to the *PCT Gazette*, the *PCT Newsletter* and the *PCT Applicant's Guide*, Volume II, National Chapters, all available from WIPO's Internet site, at <http://www.wipo.int/pct/en/index.html>.

For filing a demand for international preliminary examination, see the *PCT Applicant's Guide*, Volume I/A, Chapter IX. Only an applicant who is a national or resident of a PCT Contracting State which is bound by Chapter II has the right to file a demand for international preliminary examination (at present, all PCT Contracting States are bound by Chapter II).

It is the applicant's sole responsibility to monitor all these time limits.

The International Bureau of WIPO
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Authorized officer

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PATENT COOPERATION TREATY
PCT
INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT
(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference PE-0692	FOR FURTHER ACTION See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)	
International application No. PCT/BR 03/00122	International filing date (day/month/year) 27.08.2003	Priority date (day/month/year) 04.11.2002
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC C22B34/20		
<p>Applicant COMPANHIA BRASILEIRA DE METALURGIA E MINERACAO - C</p>		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 5 sheets, including this cover sheet.
 - This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

These annexes consist of a total of sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:
 - I Basis of the opinion
 - II Priority
 - III Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
 - IV Lack of unity of invention
 - V Reasoned statement under Rule 66.2(a)(ii) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
 - VI Certain documents cited
 - VII Certain defects in the international application
 - VIII Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 30.03.2004	Date of completion of this report 24.01.2005
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:  European Patent Office - P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk - Pays Bas Tel. +31 70 340 - 2040 Tx: 31 651 epo nl Fax: +31 70 340 - 3016	Authorized Officer Bombeke, M Telephone No. +31 70 340-3576



INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No. PCT/BR 03/00122

I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application (*Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17)*):

Description, Pages

1-15 as originally filed

Claims, Numbers

1-10 as originally filed

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

- the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
- the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
- the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

- contained in the international application in written form.
- filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
- furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
- furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
- The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
- The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- the description, pages:
- the claims, Nos.:
- the drawings, sheets:

5. This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)).

(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/BR 03/00122

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Yes: Claims	1-10
	No: Claims	
Inventive step (IS)	Yes: Claims	1-10
	No: Claims	
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes: Claims	1-10
	No: Claims	

2. Citations and explanations

see separate sheet

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/BR 03/00122

Re Item V

Reasoned statement with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Reference is made to the following documents:

D1: US-A-5234491
D2: WO-A-01/59166
D3: US-A-6136062

2. The present application does meet the criteria of Article 33(1) PCT, because the subject-matter of claims 1-10 is new and involves an inventive step in the sense of Article 33(2) and 33(3) PCT.

2.1. The subject-matter of claim 1 concerns the production of Nb and/or Ta powder by reducing Nb/Ta compound material with an alkali metal or earth alkali metal reductant in a bath of molten salt. Such a process is basically known from D1 or D2 (see i.a. the examples) and also from the prior art acknowledged in the present application.

Claim 1 differs from this known production process in that " oxidized powder (powder of of adequate size, consisting basically in metallic Nb and/or Ta and/or their hydrides of high purity, previously oxidized in a controlled manner)" is used as starting material for the reduction step, Art. 33(2) PCT.

2.2. The particular processing proposed in claim 1 is considered to involve an inventive step (Article 33(3) PCT) for the following reasons:

Although D3 shows that Nb powder can equally well be produced from niobium "oxide" (Nb₂O₃) by reducing the same in a Mg melt (i.e. a process similar to reduction with Na, Mg etc. in a bath of molten salt known from D1 or D2), it is clear that the process of D3 requires a reduction in two steps to avoid excessive generation of exothermic reaction heat, which is deleterious for the morphology of the finally obtained metal (usually resulting in a molten product instead of a powder).

The inventiveness of the claimed process resides in the controlled (partial) oxidation of a starting powder of Nb or Ta, which allows upon subsequent reduction to control reaction heat and thereby to obtain a sponge type metallic powder with large surface area.

2.3. Claims 2-10 are depending from claim 1 and therefore they also meet the requirements of the PCT in respect of novelty and inventive step.

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/BR 03/00122

3. The application does not meet the requirements of Article 6 PCT, because claim 1 is not clear.

More in particular, the feature to "oxidized powder" is defined in an obscure way:

- the expressions following oxidized powder are put between brackets "(...)", and hence cannot be considered as unambiguously defining the feature in question;
- the powder origin and the oxidizing pretreatment are not specified in a sufficiently clear and precise manner.

4. Contrary to the requirements of Rule 5.1(a)(ii) PCT, the relevant background art disclosed in the documents D1-D3 is not mentioned in the description, nor are these documents identified therein.